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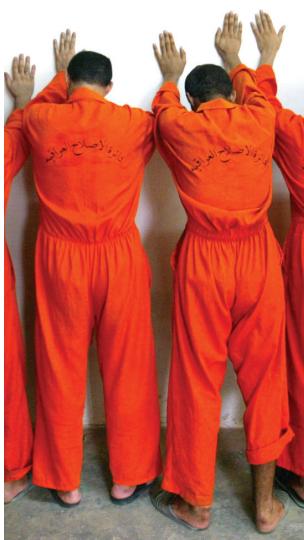
INSIDE



Deadline Extended

Iraqi insurgents threatening to kill a Filipino hostage unless the government agrees to an early troop withdrawal from the Middle East country have extended the deadline until Tuesday, an official said.

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Abu Ghraib Remake

The new Iraqi administration is trying to remake the image of Abu Ghraib prison, the notorious jail on Baghdad's western outskirts where a worldwide scandal began.

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Porsche Envy

Consider the "base" 911 Carrera. It comes with a 3.6-liter, horizontally opposed six-cylinder engine that develops 325 horsepower at 6,800 revolutions per minute. Torque, the twisting power exerted on the drive shaft, is tremendous at 273 foot-pounds at 4,250 revolutions per minute.

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

SPLISH-SPLASH

Participants in the Eco Camp at the Mariana Resort and Spa have loads of fun as they paddle around at the wading pool. The third session of Eco Camp kicked off at the yesterday.

MPLA's Hofschneider suspended

By CASSIE DLG FEJERAN
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Commissioner Henry Hofschneider of the Marianas Public Lands Authority has been suspended for 15 days beginning July 9 for alleged insubordination.

The suspension order was issued by MPLA chair Ana Demapan-Castro, who cited a July 30 memorandum as basis for her authority to issue the suspension order.

She also asked Hofschneider to refer

all pending matters that he is involved in to the Deputy Commissioner and asked him to surrender all office keys and any MPLA property he may have.

The suspension was immediately opposed by MPLA board member Nicolas Nekai and board vice chairman Manuel P. Villagomez, who both issued separate memoranda questioning Demapan-Castro's authority to issue the suspension and whether the reasons cited for the suspension warranted such action.

The *Saipan Tribune* tried to obtain

comments from Hofschneider but he was not listed on the local directory. The *Tribune* also tried to obtain comments from Demapan-Castro and Nekai but both declined.

According to documents obtained by the *Saipan Tribune*, Demapan-Castro informed Hofschneider in a memorandum dated July 9 that his employment with the agency is being suspended and that he is being placed on administrative leave, with pay, for 15 days, or until July

See **MPLA** on Page 12

License plates now required in vehicle's front, rear

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

Unofficial license plates may no longer be displayed in front of motor vehicles.

It is now law to display Bureau of Motor Vehicle-issued license plates in the front and rear sides of the vehicle,

with the signing into law of House Bill 14-18 yesterday.

"This requirement will greatly enhance the ability of our law enforcement officials to quickly identify vehicles and assist residents to recognize vehicles entering their private property," Gov. Juan N. Babauta said.

The governor signed the bill into law that amends the statutory provision requiring the display of an official plate only at the vehicle's rear.

Operating a motor vehicle that does not display the Commonwealth number plates is considered a misdemeanor offense,

See **LICENSE** on Page 12

'House leadership solid'

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER



House Rep. Ray Yumul yesterday flew to Hawaii for a three-week training for the Army Reserve, with the possibility that he could be deployed along with other CNMI reservists to Iraq or Afghanistan to augment U.S. troops.

If Yumul vacates his legislative post and joins the U.S. forces in the Middle East, the leadership-minority ratio at the House of Representatives

See **HOUSE** on Page 12

Tourist arrivals soar by 67.52 percent in June

By AGNES E. DONATO
REPORTER

Visitor arrivals showed phenomenal growth last month, rising by 67.52 percent as compared with the same period in 2003.

According to the Marianas Visitors Authority, the islands received a total of 45,714 visitors last month—a significant

improvement from the 27,288 tourists that came in June 2003, when arrivals were at the lowest.

MVA attributed the increase to the recovery of all markets from the negative impact resulting from the SARS outbreak last year. It also noted that arrival level for the month exceeded figures for the same month since 1997.

"[But] it is important to note that this

month's arrivals compared to 2002 figures provide a more precise indication for the growth in visitor arrivals," MVA said. The 2003 figures could provide a distorted or misleading basis for comparison, as they reflect the impact of SARS, which caused a low arrival base.

There were 39,708 tourists who visited the CNMI in June 2002.

According to MVA statistics, all markets

recorded huge growths in June 2004.

Arrivals from Japan—the CNMI's primary tourism market—experienced the highest improvement rate since the beginning of the fiscal year. Japanese tourists totaled 32,822 last month, almost double the 18,504 visitors who visited in June 2003.

The Japan market also indicates that

See **TOURIST** on Page 12

Local

verizon
cmyk

JAL adds flights for peak summer season

By AGNES E. DONATO
REPORTER

Citing increased passenger demand, Japan Airlines yesterday announced eight extra flights between Haneda and Saipan during the peak summer season.

JAL Group Saipan District Office administration manager Yasuyoshi Kinoshita said the additional flights from Haneda would be serviced by Boeing 767 planes, which can accommodate 232 passengers each flight.

The charter flights will provide an additional 1,856 passenger seats for Japanese tourists.

"Summer vacation in Japan will start on July 17 and run until the end of August. A lot of Japanese tourists will be traveling during this period," Kinoshita noted.

Kinoshita said the additional Haneda flights would leave Haneda on July 29, 30, and 31 and on Aug. 1, 25, 26, 27, and 28.

The flights are tentatively scheduled to depart from Han-

da at 11:30pm, with a 3:50am estimated time of arrival. Using a different aircraft, the service will leave at 3:15am and arrive in Haneda at 5:30am.

Marianas Visitors Authority managing director Vicky Benavente welcomed the added service, noting that they "will assist in strengthening the CNMI's tourism industry."

"We are very pleased to see this increased air service that would spark a whole new appeal to both the business professional and recreational travelers. JALWays has contributed so much to the CNMI's tourism industry and with the added seats, we expect a significant increase in arrivals for the summer months," Benavente said.

MVA further noted the additional flights will be able to service passengers departing not only from Haneda but also nearby areas such as Tokyo, Shinjuku, Shibuya and Ikebukuro. Tourists from Kawasaki, Yokohama and

other popular diving spots in Shonan also stand to benefit from the new service.

In line with the summer high peak travel season, MVA has

commenced its popular "Happy Children in Paradise" summer campaign. The "Saipan-da" backpack giveaway will be provided to children 11 years and

under who visit the CNMI from July 1 to Sept. 30.

In addition, a live-in-motion Saipan-da character will be making special appearances at

major hotels and present daily greetings to the arriving passengers on flights into Saipan.

JAL operates daily flights between Narita and Kansai.

CUC and Babauta meeting cancelled

By AGNES E. DONATO
REPORTER

Two members of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. board of directors expressed disappointment over the cancellation of the group's scheduled meeting with Gov. Juan N. Babauta.

The meeting was cited as the main reason why the board's election of new officers had to be postponed on July 7. The CUC directors were supposed to meet with the governor on Friday, but the meeting did not push through.

CUC chair Herman P. Sablan said the meeting was cancelled because "something came up and the governor had to do something else."

No new date has been set so far for the meeting, but it would likely happen after the board installs a new set of officers today, Sablan said.

For their part, directors Joe Torres and Velma Ann Palacios said they were disappointed that the meeting did not go through.

"I feel that if the reason for re-scheduling the election was to allow us to meet with the governor first, then we should have met with him," Torres maintained.

He said he waited all day on Friday to be given details about the supposed meeting, only to find out that it had been cancelled. He added that he continued waiting yesterday, but still heard nothing about the meeting.

"I was very anxious. I was looking forward to meeting with the governor and finding out what he wanted to talk to us about," Torres said.



Babauta

Palacios said she did not get any details either regarding the cancellation of the meeting.

"I was disappointed that we didn't meet. I was trying to see if there's a reschedule, but I did not hear anything," she said.

Sablan, however, assured concerned citizens that the election of officers at CUC will take place, as scheduled, at 3pm today.

The election had earlier been set for the last week of June—in accordance with the CUC by-laws—but it was put off for July 7, as CUC officials had to prioritize recovery efforts after Typhoon Tingting.

During last Wednesday's meeting, CUC vice chair Francisco Guerrero moved to strike the election from the agenda, citing the agency's lack of a representative from Rota.

He later added that Babauta, who appointed the directors to the CUC board, had requested the postponement of the election.

The board agreed to have the election today.

crees

HEROES

CARS UNLIMITED

GOV OFFICE NAME THE MALL
CMYK

Continental tops best employer survey

Employees rank Continental No. 1 in nearly all categories



**HAGATNA ,
Guam**—Continental Micronesia took top honors in Guam Business magazine's poll of the "Best Companies to Work For."

Continental was among a number of local companies invited by Guam Business to participate in the magazine's first ever survey of workplaces, factors affecting employees and what makes for the best work environment. Survey data were tabulated by Market Research & Development Inc.

Ranked by employees, Continental Micronesia took first place in seven of nine categories including leadership, working environment, decision making and supervision, performance management, rewards and recognition, organizational communication and employee benefits.

Mark A. Erwin, Continental Micronesia president and chief ex-

ecutive officer, attributes high employee satisfaction to the airline's commitment to treating co-workers with dignity and respect.

"Working together works at Continental. It is an honor to have employees recognize that even in difficult times, we have a great place to work. Congratulations to the CMI leadership team for their recognition of the kind of leadership and work environment that makes employees proud to work for such a great airline," Erwin said.

Continental Airlines is the world's sixth-largest airline with more than 2,900 daily departures throughout the Americas, Europe and Asia. Continental serves 149 domestic and 119 international destinations—more than any other airline in the world—and nearly 200 additional points are served via code-share partner airlines.

With 41,000 mainline em-

ployees, the airline has hubs serving New York, Houston, Cleveland and Guam, and carries approximately 51 million passengers per year.

In 2004, Continental earned awards and critical acclaim for both its operation and its corporate culture. FORTUNE ranks Continental one of the 100 Best Companies to Work For in America, an honor it has earned for six consecutive years, and also ranks Continental as the top airline in its Most Admired Global Companies in 2004.

The carrier won major awards at the 2004 OAG Airline of the Year Awards, including "Airline of the Year," "Best Airline Based in North America" and "Best Executive/Business Class." For more company information, visit continental.com.

Continental Micronesia is headquartered in Guam and operates a Pacific hub from the

A.B. Won Pat Guam International Airport. A wholly owned subsidiary of Continental Airlines, Continental Micronesia offers more than 290 departures each week between 22 cities throughout the Pacific Rim, the Micronesian Islands and Hawaii with a fleet of 13 next-generation Boeing 737 narrowbody and 767 widebody aircraft.

Guam Business magazine is widely distributed in the region and is the best-selling magazine in Micronesia, according to Micronesia Media, which distributes periodicals on Guam and Saipan. Guam Business, whose slogan is "the authority on business in Micronesia," has been published for 21 years. Copies of the most recent issue of Guam Business with the "Top Companies to Work For" feature can be found at bookstores and service stations on Guam and Saipan, and is available by subscription.

Authorities search for sharks after fatal attack

PERTH, Australia (AP)—Authorities Sunday were hunting for two massive sharks, one as "big as a car," after they attacked and killed a surfer at a popular beach in western Australia.

The sharks, both believed to be Great Whites, attacked the 29-year old while he was surfing near Gracetown, about 300 kilometers (185 miles) south of

Perth city, on Saturday.

"We saw the guy start scrambling around and saw him clinging to the shark and ... trying to whack it and trying to get away," surfer Mitch Campbell told Nine Network television Sunday.

Another surfer said the attack was distressing but would not stop him from surfing.

"We were going to go down to the beach for a surf and a couple of blokes came up and said, 'don't go down there—somebody's been bitten in half by a shark,'" Bart Mulder told Australian Broadcasting Corp. radio. "It won't stop me surfing."

An ambulance officer said the victim suffered extensive injuries to the pelvis and abdomen.

He died on the beach before medical workers reached him.

A witness, who was not named, told Sky News television, two teenagers who pulled the victim out of the water said one of the sharks was "as big as a car."

Television news footage showed a large part of Smith's board had been bitten off.

Registration on for 2nd annual NMASH confab

The Northern Marianas Alliance for Safety and Health said that registration is now open for its 2nd Annual Governor's Health and Safety Conference, to be held August 17-20, 2004.

Last year's initial conference drew over 200 participants from the community's private and public sector groups, and NMASH expects a larger audience with its greater focus on certification for the sessions' attendees.

NMASH, with trainers and presenters from OSHA Region IX in San Francisco, the OSHA Institute in Illinois and local CNMI Government, will conduct simultaneous construction industry and general industry tracks over a three-day period aimed at awarding OSHA training certification to the conference participants.

The conference will include its opening remarks by Alliance co-chairs Richard A. Pierce and Al Johnson, and remarks by Gov. Juan N. Babauta and OSHA Region IX Administrator Frank Strasheim.

The general sessions and breakout sessions will have topics that include fire prevention, suppression and evacuation, respirator training, hazardous materials handling, long shoring, public safety for workers, sanitation in food procurement, ergonomics, nursing homes, safe drinking

water, hospitals, blood-borne pathogens, First Aid & CPR training in English, Mandarin and Tagalog, and domestic violence in the workplace.

The CNMI OSHA Consultation will be introduced for CNMI employers and DEQ will discuss its upcoming partnership with the Saipan Garment Manufacturers Association.

NMASH Alliance Members include the OSHA Region IX Offices in San Francisco, the OSHA Region IX Education Center in San Diego, the Northern Marianas College, the SGMA, the Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Saipan Contractors Association, the Saipan Chamber of Commerce, and the departments of Public Safety, Labor, Environmental Quality and Public Works.

NMASH alliance member companies and government offices are encouraged to reserve entry through their respective groups and association headquarters. Conference fees will be announced with the hotel venue site after a NMASH Alliance meeting on July 14, 2004.

Please contact NMC's David Attao at 234-5498, SGMA's Emy Taitano at 235-7699 and the Saipan Chamber of Commerce Office at 233-7150 for registration information.

cuc 015

cuc 017



Municipal council lauds Attao for educational achievement

The 8th Saipan and Northern Islands Municipal Council recently

presented commemorative resolution congratulating and commanding Guadalupe Tenorio Attao for graduating at Boise High School in Idaho with a weighted grade point average of 4.020, and for bringing honor and distinction to the people of the CNMI.

Attao enrolled at Boise High School on Aug. 27, 2001, and graduated on May 27, 2004. During her high school at Boise she was a straight "A" student, and graduated at the upper 10 percent of the senior class comprising 345 graduating students.

Attao was awarded the Robert R. Lee promise scholarship and she has been admitted at Boise State University. She was also awarded the Gold (B) award for attaining a 3.75 cumulative

GPA for seven semesters.

Attao was born on Jan. 11, 1987, and the daughter of proud parents Rep. Jesus Torres Attao and Mrs. Ramona Pangelinan Tenorio Attao of Upper Navy Hill, Saipan.

"The members of the municipal council join the people of the CNMI in extending special recognition, congratulation and commendation to Miss Guadalupe Tenorio Attao for her Special Educational Achievement as a straight "A" student and for bringing honor and distinction to the people of the CNMI and her family," part of the resolution reads.

The resolution was certified by municipal council chair Gregorio V. Deleon Guerrero and vice chair David A. Indalecio and attested by secretary Antonia M. Tudela.

Front row, from left to right, Rep. Jesus T. Attao, Winona Camacho, vice chair David A. Indalecio, Guadalupe T. Attao, Ramona T. Attao, Monica T. Attao, Lorenzo C. Attao and chairman Gregorio V. Deleon Guerrero. Back row, from left to right, Jojo T. Attao, Sharlene Cepeda, Debra Camacho, Cecilia Camacho, Leila C. Attao, Monica T. Attao and Blas T. Attao.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

UCEDD to give away 280 wheelchairs in Oct.

Good news for those in need of wheelchairs!

The University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities at the Northern Marianas College will soon be donating 280 brand new wheelchairs to indigent persons with disabilities in the CNMI.

UCEED coordinator Rob Erickson said their UCE Program has a number of exciting projects happening in the coming months, including the "Wheelchair Giveaway of 2004."

"I am very happy to say that [this project] will become a reality soon. In cooperation with the Wheelchair Foundation of California, we will be able to donate 280 brand new wheelchairs to the needy people of the CNMI. The distribution will be held on the NMC campus in early October. You will soon be seeing details and applications in local newspapers," he said.

Another exciting event his office is sponsoring is the 2005 PBILC Conference. "In March of 2005 we are presenting the Pacific Basin Interagency Leadership Conference, which will be attended by 300-500 service providers and individuals with disabilities from all over the Pacific and other countries... A very exciting opportunity. Please join us in March 2005," Erickson said.

This will be third time the CNMI has hosted the conference.

UCEED (pronounced "you said") has been part of the NMC family since 1993 and has a wonderful opportunity to provide support, training, and improvement of services and lives of those who live with developmental disabilities in the CNMI.

Besides Erickson, the office also includes the office's admin manager, Josephine Fejeran. The

local UCEDD program is one of 61 programs around the country and territories. It is supported by the University of Hawaii, Manoa and is mandated by the federal Developmental Disability Act. It works closely with NMPASI, a developmental disability advocacy program, and CNMI Developmental Disability Council.

The NMC UCEDD Program is attached to the COMPASS unit and has a strong supportive relationship with them. Since the program outreach is focused on the community at large, COMPASS is the best place to house the program at NMC. The

UCE program is governed by a Consumer Advisory Council that provides direction and guidance for its outreach through the development of an annual work scope that leads their efforts throughout the year.

"We are blessed with a group of dedicated members of our CAC," Erickson said.

UCEED also interacts as a member of a number of committees supporting DD issues in the CNMI. "It is a wonderful opportunity to represent important issues on a groups that can bring about much needed changes on our islands. Networking and

interagency support is the key for proactive development of support issues," he said.

"I have recently had the opportunity to attend the UCEDD Directors meeting in Chicago,

Illinois, and was able to learn a great deal on how UCE's operate and most importantly tell people about our wonderful island and all the proactive things people are doing to support and empower

people with developmental disabilities," he related.

Erickson invites people to drop by their office in Building P on the NMC campus and visit them or call them at 234-5498 ex 1028.

cu meet

nmpasi

Business

Smile if your job involves face time

By FRANK LEVY and RICHARD J. MURNANE
SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON POST

Economic recovery is a slippery term. A sick patient can recover to a normal state. But the labor market has no "normal state"—it is constantly changing—and so economic recovery can lead us into uncharted territory.

Take the current recovery. This year the U.S. economy has added more than 1.1 million jobs, according to numbers released last week. But that news, while welcome after months of losses in 2002 and 2003, masks a disquieting trend. Employment is increasing largely in two areas: managerial/professional jobs and service employment. Meanwhile, production and office work that can be done at lower cost by a computer or in lower-wage countries continues to disappear. This pattern of gains and losses helps explain why the public remains cautious about the economy and why the ranks of the working poor may well grow even as the job market expands.

A story helps illustrate the shift. A year ago, a General Electric technician came to a suburban home to repair a refrigerator. He apologized for having called ahead for driving directions: The work order, he said, had a Zip code and telephone number but no street address. "They switched our call center from India to Costa Rica and the operators must be having trouble with addresses down there," he speculated.

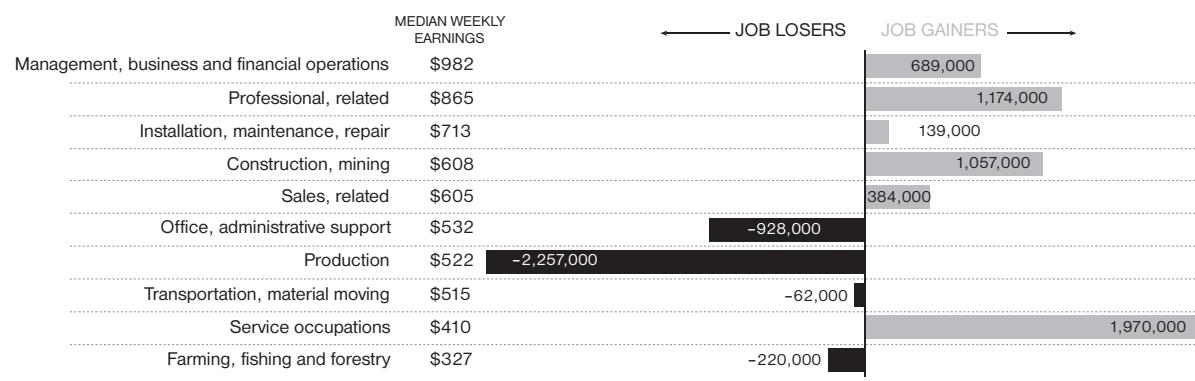
The explanation was plausible but one step behind the times. No call center had arranged the appointment; it had been scheduled by a computer. Its digitized voice could recite menus ("I am going to read a list of common refrigerator problems ..."). Its software could interpret spoken numbers and a few spoken words, enough to schedule

Winners and Losers

While the number of jobs in the United States is greater now than four years ago, the largest growth has been concentrated at the top and bottom of the earnings spectrum—in highly skilled

jobs and in service occupations. Meanwhile, significant declines have occurred in the number of lower-paying production and clerical jobs.

Job growth, June 2000 vs. June 2004 Ranked by median weekly earnings, 2004 first quarter.



SOURCES: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; Current Population Survey

respects, professional jobs and service jobs are polar opposites. Most professional work (lawyers, nurses, engineers) requires more than four years of college. Most service work (janitors, cafeteria aides, security guards) requires only basic literacy. Professional jobs average \$45,000 a year plus benefits. Service jobs average \$20,000 for full-year workers and often lack benefits. What these expanding occupations have in common is the face-to-face nature of their work.

The largest job losses in the last four years were in production and clerical work—nearly 3 million jobs lost overall. The jobs paid on average \$25,000 per year and many were open to high school graduates who did not go on to college. These are largely rules-based jobs. While some of these jobs will come back as the economy improves, many have been permanently lost to computerization and offshoring.

Over the next few years, even if the recovery creates new jobs, the market will continue to migrate toward face-to-face work. Most losers in this shift will come from the 55 million adult workers whose education ended at high school. Carpenters, mechanics and others with skills in a craft will still do well, but many high school graduates without specialized skills will end up in service jobs that offer lower pay and fewer benefits than in the manufacturing and clerical jobs they once held. It's a case of too many less-skilled workers chasing too few jobs.

This changing job mix helps resolve the noisy political debate over whether the economic recovery is producing "good" or "bad" jobs. The recovery is producing good and bad jobs. Educated and skilled workers are getting good jobs while the market for high school graduates without particular skills is slowly falling apart.

U.S. employment is increasing largely in two areas: managerial/professional jobs and service employment. Meanwhile, production and office work that can be done at lower cost by a computer or in lower-wage countries continues to disappear. This pattern of gains and losses helps explain why the public remains cautious about the economy and why the ranks of the working poor may well grow even as the job market expands. FRANK LEVY/RICHARD J. MURNANE

the repair. It was the next step in cost cutting, and an ironic one—a computer displacing an already outsourced job.

Scheduling a refrigerator repair is what we would call a "rules-based" job—one that can be accomplished by adhering to a step-by-step procedure ("First, determine what appliance is broken ..."). When a firm seeks to cut costs, rules-based jobs are a ripe target. If the rules can be clearly defined, the work can be programmed for a computer or sent to another country where workers can follow procedure with minimal risk of misunderstanding. Rules-based jobs exist throughout the economy, but their greatest concentration is in clerical work and manufacturing. Thus, U.S. insurance claims are

now processed in India, robots have replaced many assembly line workers, and the refrigerator that needed the repair was made in Mexico.

The rest of the economy's work is done in "face-to-face" jobs, which require a human presence because the work is too complex to reduce to a list of rules and the work must be done here. No step-by-step procedure can describe how a lawyer tries a case or a teacher handles fourth-graders or an auto mechanic fixes a problem that isn't in the manual.

Also falling into this category are many of the lowest-paying U.S. jobs. A janitor's job, which requires entering a workplace and making sense of what he or she sees, is enormously difficult to reduce to a sequence of

rules. So janitors survive—their work can't be outsourced, of course, but it can't be automated either.

As the economic recovery continues, no one supposes that GE or other employers will stop looking for ways to cut costs. The easy target will be rules-based jobs, a large percentage of which historically have been held by high school graduates. What remains will be an increasingly face-to-face labor market that tilts heavily against workers without specialized skills.

To see the tilt, consider the occupational changes of the past four years, when the number of professional and managerial jobs grew by 1.9 million and the number of workers employed in service jobs grew by almost 2 million. In many

LABOR

TASI IFB

TASI IFB

Surge in crude rate keeps gas prices flat

CAMARILLO, Calif. (AP)—Gasoline prices remained nearly flat in the last two weeks after a surge in the cost of crude oil slowed dropping pump prices, an industry analyst said Sunday.

The weighted national average price for all three grades of gasoline dipped about a penny between June 25 and Friday—to \$1.96 per gallon, said Trilby Lundberg, who publishes the semimonthly Lundberg Survey. The survey polls nearly 8,000 gas stations across the United States.

Since May 21, that represents a drop of 14 cents, when the average price was pegged at slightly above \$2.10 a gallon.

The biggest seller in the two-week period, self-serve regular, averaged \$1.93 a gallon.

In a statement, Lundberg said a steady drop in pump prices leveled off after crude oil jumped about \$2 a barrel during the two-week period, spurred by security concerns, Lundberg said.

However, with the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries adding 500,000 barrels a day to its output in August—and U.S. refineries maximizing production and imports to meet traditional summer demand—pump prices should remain stable or fall further, Lundberg said.

The national weighted average price of a gallon of gasoline at self-serve pumps on Friday, including taxes, was about \$2.03 for midgrade and \$2.12 for premium, Lundberg said.

By JEANNINE AVERSA
AP WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP)—Jump in now. That's the advice from experts to people who are thinking about refinancing a home or buying one, in light of the recent drop in mortgage rates.

Those falling rates are seen as temporary. Forecasters predict rates will again start to slowly climb through next year.

"Strike while the iron is hot," says Greg McBride, a financial analyst with Bankrate.com, an online financial service.

"There is no telling exactly when they might quickly reverse course and move higher," he said.

The mortgage company Freddie Mac reported last

week that rates on 30-year and 15-year fixed-rate mortgages fell for the third week in a row and were at their lowest levels since the spring.

Rates on one-year adjustable-rate mortgages were at their lowest point since the beginning of June.

The declines took experts by surprise.

The lower rates, generally speaking, reflected investors' growing confidence in the Federal Reserve's ability to keep inflation under control.

They also signal investors' sense that the economy will grow solidly, though not so fast that Fed policy-makers would be forced to move aggressively in raising short-term interest rates.

Those market forces pushed

down bond rates, which in turn depressed mortgage rates.

Benchmark 30-year mortgages dropped last week to 6.01 percent while 15-year mortgages were at 5.42 percent and one-year ARMs at 4.05 percent, according to weekly figures compiled by Freddie Mac.

"It's unlikely you're going to see a decline of interest rates from where they are at today unless the economy starts to really dramatically slow and I don't know of anyone, including ourselves, who is forecasting that," says Doug Duncan, chief economist at the Mortgage Bankers Association.

"So this is an opportunity. I would say that we're going to see modestly rising rates in the next couple of years. This is a tempo-

rary dip. And, if you are ready to go, then go," Duncan said.

By year's end, rates on 30-year mortgages could reach 7 percent, 15-year rates 6.25 percent and one-year ARMs more than 5 percent, according to various estimates.

Lenders say the recent drop in rates has led to a burst of activity.

On the home-loan side, house hunters are deciding to go ahead and lock in deals before rates move higher.

On the refinancing side, people are going with bigger loans at a lower rate and using the extra cash to pay for home improvements or reduce debts such as credit card bills.

The Mortgage Bankers Association said its weekly index of mortgage applications—both

for home purchases and for refinancings—increased by 19.5 percent for the week ending July 2, compared with the previous week.

Nicholas Farina, senior vice president of the consumer lending division at MortgageIT, an online mortgage company, says he is seeing homeowners who bought in the past year or two refinance a bigger home loan than they started out. That frees up extra cash for whatever they want.

Most other homeowners, he said, are more likely to have refinanced their mortgage last year when rates fell to the record lows. That powered not only a refinancing boom but also sent home sales to all-time highs in 2003.

Enron wife trades luxury for prison

HOUSTON (AP)—For the next year, home for the real estate and grocery heiress married to Enron's former finance chief will be an 8-foot-by-10-foot cell. She'll live with a roommate, share a toilet and endure noise that doesn't stop at lights-out.



Fastow

On Monday, Lea Fastow must report to the federal lock-up in downtown Houston, where she will serve a year for her misdemeanor conviction of signing a fraudulent tax return to help her husband, Andrew, hide ill-gotten income from schemes that fueled the energy company's crash.

The family home is a \$696,000, two-story brick home in the affluent South-

ampton neighborhood. When Andrew Fastow pleaded guilty in January, he agreed to surrender \$23.8 million in cash and property, including two vacation homes in Galveston and Vermont.

But that life is a world away from the federal detention center, a gray, 11-story building where the only chance to go outside is during brief and rare outings on the roof. She'll probably prepare food or wash bed sheets for less than 50 cents a day.

"She'll spend the vast majority of her time indoors under fluorescent lights," said David Novak, a former Microsoft consultant who served a year in a federal prison for mail fraud.

PARIS (AP)—The European Union softened demands that Washington scrap export credits for farmers when five major trade powers met here for weekend talks ahead of a looming deadline for a global framework trade deal.

European Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy said Sunday the EU would "factor in" the insistence by U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick that not all of the credits distort trade.

"Our starting position is to eliminate (them) but the U.S. made a point which we have to check now," Lamy said.

The EU and U.S. representatives were in Paris for informal talks with Australia, Brazil and India, three weeks before the deadline for an outline trade accord among the World Trade Organization's 147 members.

Differences on farm trade scuttled the last attempt to reach

how closely their interest rates and other conditions reflected commercial lending markets.

Europe breathed new life into the process with a May offer to end controversial export subsidies to its farmers—but only in return for the scrapping of export support to producers in other developed countries, including U.S. export credits.

Lamy's remarks represent a considerable softening of the Brussels line. On Saturday, an EU agriculture spokesman had insisted that all the U.S. credits distorted trade and must be eliminated.

"It's like being pregnant or not—there's not very much in between," Gregor Kreuzhuber had said.

Lamy said on Sunday that the export credits—government loans enabling farmers to offer low-risk credit to overseas customers—should be evaluated according to

Zoellick did not comment on the apparent EU concession. Washington has already pledged to drop trade-distorting "subsidy elements" of its export credit program.

Export aid is just one of many thorny issues facing WTO negotiators as they seek agreement by the end of the month on formulas for cutting tariffs and subsidies as part of a new global trade treaty.

Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim, who hosted the weekend talks at his country's Paris embassy, said there had been a "convergence of ideas that might enable us to come to a result."

WTO members broadly agree that the global economy needs a new trade treaty to open up markets to more international commerce.

CDA MEET

BOP HEAR-
ING

RMS

Opinion

Saipan Tribune

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MEMBER

AP The Associated Press

Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL



YOUTH IN ACTION

The Department of Public Works has tapped these summer trainees from the Workforce Investment Agency in its efforts to temporarily restore a portion of the Beach Road pathway, which collapsed during Typhoon Tingting.

ADA, judicial system: Dealing with persons with disabilities

By CASSIE DLG FEJERAN
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

The Developmental Disabilities Tri-Agency Network composed of the CNMI Council on Developmental Disabilities, Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems Inc., and the Northern Marianas College University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities have begun sessions that ultimately aim to assist people with disabilities in the CNMI. The first session was held in the World Resort Hotel early yesterday morning.

Brenda L. King from The Arc of the Pikes Peak Region in Colorado presented information on the Special Offenders' Coalition for policy makers on Saipan, and brought to the fore issues affecting people with developmental disabilities.

The Arc is the national organization of and for people with mental retardation and related developmental disabilities and their families. The Arc is devoted to promoting and improving supports and services for people with mental retardation and their families.

fice to further investigate the matter.

At the same time, Demapan-Castro cited Hofsneider's "abrupt departure" from an MPLA meeting last July 2 and his failure to return. "While issues were being discussed, you got up from your chair, slammed the door, and left the room. I tried to speak to you, but you refused to listen," she said in the memo.

Demapan-Castro based her authority on a July 30 memo where the MPLA board members granted her full authority to terminate for cause, if necessary, any employee of the MPLA who, in the discretion of the chairperson, is not efficiently performing his or her duties, or otherwise not complying with MPLA's rules and regulations. That memo was signed by Villagomez, Pedro JL Igital and Pedro M. Atalig.

Villagomez, however, insisted in a July 9 memo to Demapan-Castro that he does not agree with her decision, saying she does not have the authority to alone do what the full board of MPLA is required to do.

"You should have been more deliberate and sensible in your action, and I believe you failed to act in good judgment. You must rescind your memorandum at once," he urged.

He insisted that the requisition's al-

The first session taught judicial branch personnel, government and private attorneys and paralegals on appropriate legal actions that could be done to help people with disabilities.

Other sessions include transportation provided by private businesses, telecommunications relay services, ADA and law enforcement, and employment for people with disabilities.

Sessions on traumatic brain injury, social security benefits, ADA, and parking access law will be held on Tinian and Rota on June 28 and 30.

teration was not an issue, saying that, since requisitions for funds drawdown are always prepared administratively at the instruction of Hofsneider, he has authority to do what he did.

"The facts indicate that he and the CDA executive director spoke and agreed on the proposed change to Requisition No. FY04-03 before it was done. I do not believe the decision of the commissioner and CDA executive director was wrong," Villagomez said.

As for Hofsneider's leaving the meeting, Villagomez said the meeting was not even an MPLA meeting but one with the land compensation working group. He said Hofsneider had asked his permission to be excused from the upcoming board meeting as he had a headache. This was concurred in by board member Nekai, who said Hofsneider had also asked his permission to leave before the board meeting.

Nekai also stated, "The adjustment of Requisition No. FY04-03 was not illegal. The amount was adjusted to account for the funds that had not been expended by the MPLA. The disbursement to the land claimants was in order and no funds were mismanaged or mishandled."

MPLA

From Page 1

29, 2004.

Hofsneider's alleged insubordination arose when he allowed the Commonwealth Development Authority to alter document requisition No. FY04-03 without the board's approval and written consent. The document requisition is related to the transfer of MPLA funds at the Bank of Guam to pay for land compensation claims. Hofsneider allegedly allowed the CDA to alter the amount of funds being transferred from \$216,322 to \$134,695.91 without specific information as to whom the revised drawdown amount is intended to compensate.

In the schedule of requisition request prepared by Hofsneider and MPLA comptroller David Demapan, the amount \$216,322 is altered with a strikethrough and above it is typed \$134,695.91. The documents showed that CDA executive director Maria Lourdes S. Ada altered the amount listed on the requisition.

"Any alteration without the board's approval is grounds for disciplinary action," Demapan-Castro said.

She also informed Hofsneider that she will ask the Attorney General's Of-

TOURIST

From Page 1

arrivals are ahead of pre-SARS level, posting a 17.07 percent increase as compared with June 2002 figures.

The emerging China market continued to be the top performer, bringing in 1,746 visitors. This is a whopping 3,463-percent increase as compared with June 2003. In addition to the regular twice-a-week flights from Guangzhou, China Southern Airlines brought in three flights from Shanghai.

Korea generated 5,967 visitors in the month of June, posting a 15-percent growth from June 2003 numbers. MVA attributed this to the three additional flights per week that Asiana Airlines started operating last June 1, to address the high travel demand during the summer season.

Data, however, showed that the Korea market posted a 16.64-percent decline as compared with June 2002.

The 60th anniversary commemoration of the Battles of Saipan and Tinian caused arrivals from the United States to post a triple-digit increase

of 117 percent over the June 2003 figure and 107.71 percent over the June 2002 figure.

The U.S. market brought in 1,967 visitors last month.

"The increase for the month of June 2004 is attributed to the arrivals of three ships, which brought in a total of 945 visitors. In June 2003, there were no ships that visited the CNMI," MVA said.

Further, the year-to-date arrivals reached 391,632 last month, posting a 13.65-percent growth as compared with the figures for June 2003 and a 28-percent increase as compared with those for June 2002.

MVA noted that for the first nine months of the fiscal year, visitor arrivals posted growth for every month except in Dec. 2003 and Jan. 2004.

The 5.54-percent decline last December and the 9.02 percent drop last January were attributed to the high arrival base recorded for the same months the previous year. Supertyphoon Pongsona devastated Guam and Rota in Dec. 2003, causing a lot of Guam's visitors to divert their travel plans to Saipan instead.

to vote on the floor."

Rep. Arnold Palacios, a minority congressman and member of the Natural Resources Committee, also said Maratita has not indicated to him the possibility of defecting to the minority.

This development comes in the heels of a report that the House leadership—composed of 10 lawmakers—nearly lost the support of one partymate, Rep. Janet U. Maratita.

House leadership spokesman Charles Reyes Jr. said the issue has been resolved and that the majority group remains intact. Reyes said Maratita was simply "understandably displeased" when the Committee on Natural Resources acted on a bill when she was off-island.

House Speaker Benigno Fitial confirmed that the leadership convened Friday about their unity and solidarity.

"When I assumed the office of the Speaker in January, I had two main priorities: to improve our economy and to restore trust and confidence in our government," Fitial said. "None of these priorities could be realized without a sense of teamwork and unity in the Legislature."

House minority leader Heinz Hofschneider said no communication is going on with Maratita regarding party affiliation.

"The House is known for being stable in the past years," Hofschneider said. "What matters most is the independence of the individual

Rep. Claudio Norita, a former police major, introduced the bill, along with Reps. Jesus SN. Lizama, Janet U. Maratita, Crispin M. Ogo, and Ray N. Yumul.

According to the bill, the Legislature found that many vehicle owners do not display both license plates on the vehicle.

"Many vehicle owners choose to only display the plates on the rear of the vehicles. This has been problematic for the Department of Public Safety, creating difficulty on identifying fleeing vehicles," it states.

The governor also suggested to the Legislature to come up with another bill that would seek to regulate the display of license plates on modified vehicles.

LICENSE

From Page 1

which entails imprisonment or fine.

The amended version of 9 CMC § 2106 now partly reads: "Every owner whose vehicle or bicycle is registered shall display the plates issued by the bureau showing the registration number and year. Each of these plates shall be attached properly to the front and rear of the vehicle or bicycle, at the factory designated position."

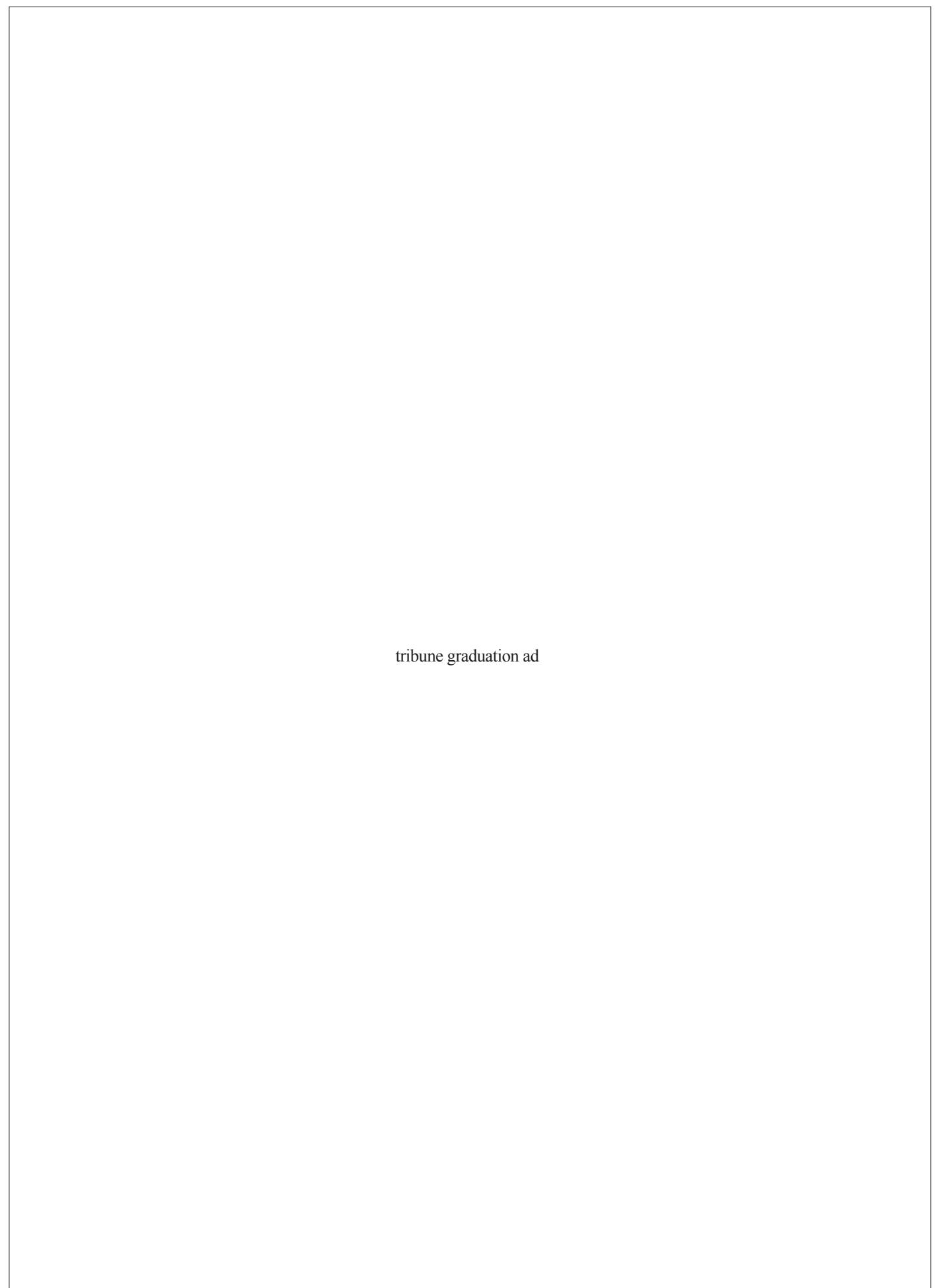
"The plates shall be kept clean and the numbers must be clearly visible from a distance of 50 feet. No vehicle or bicycle owner may display an unofficial plate at the front or rear of his vehicle or bicycle," it states further.

Business

Asia



World



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Life & Style

'Jeopardy!' champ closes in on \$1 million

By LYNN ELBER
AP TELEVISION WRITER

If the answer is Ken Jennings and his record \$920,960 so far in "Jeopardy!" winnings, the question must be, how does he do it? A curious mind, good memory and astute buzzer technique, said Jennings, a Utah software engineer who will make an unprecedented 29th appearance on the syndicated quiz show Monday night.

"A lot of it is just God-given memory that I can't take any credit for," he said. "I've always been interested in a lot of different fields. It's not just that I'm a computer engineer and all I care about is computers."

Playing "Jeopardy!" fulfills a longtime dream, said Jennings, 30, although he concedes the cash prize is a bit dreamy, too.

"It's enough fun that the money's just icing on the cake," he told The Associated Press. "But there seems to be a lot of icing."

There's also an unexpected measure of celebrity. A few "Jeopardy!" champs have caught the public eye—such as New York City transit cop Frank Spangenberg with his then-record \$100,000-plus winnings in 1990—but it's typically the challenging game itself that's the star.

Jennings' run that started airing June 2 has changed that, especially as he nears \$1 million. On Monday, he's set to appear on ABC's "Good Morning America" and on CBS' "Late Show with David Letterman."

Jennings admits feeling nervous and a bit overwhelmed by the attention.

"I remember the first time I was watching Diane Sawyer mention me," Jennings said. "Suddenly hearing her say, 'Ken Jennings,' it was very surreal. It's a little weird to me I get recognized in the grocery store, and Letterman's calling."

Not bad for a family man who gives a self-deprecating shake of the head when his cash total is announced and whose boldest gesture is adding a flourish to his name on the player ID screen.

Jennings is making the most of a change in "Jeopardy!" rules. To mark the start of its 20th season last September, the quiz show lifted its five-game limit for winners and allowed them to keep going until they lose.

On the show, which is taped in advance and crams five shows (a week's worth) into one day of production, players are given answers in a wide variety of categories and must quickly buzz in to pose the correct question.

"I admire the heck out of the guy," said Bob Harris of Los Angeles, a "Jeopardy!" five-time champion who competed before the rule change. "To run five games straight any day is mentally exhausting, and he does it flawlessly, with a big smile on his face."

"I'd be lying if I said there wasn't a certain degree of envy," added Harris, a political satirist who writes for TV and film.

Previous record-holder Tom Walsh, 39, of Washington, D.C., managed a seven-day run with \$184,900 in winnings on the show in January.

A Seattle native who grew

up in South Korea—his father works for an international law firm in Seoul—Jennings watched "Jeopardy!" on the U.S. Armed Forces TV network and thought to himself, "Hey, maybe you could go on 'Jeopardy!' You're not half bad at it."

After years of toying with the idea, he finally got "fed up with being wishy-washy," he said, and made a road trip to Los Angeles to audition. When he was invited on the show, friends and

family predicted big things.

A member of Brigham Young University's College Bowl team in the 1990s, Jennings writes and edits literature questions for the National Academic Quiz Tournament.

He insists he had modest hopes, knowing full well how tough the "Jeopardy!" competition can be.

"My expectations were maybe to get a few answers to show I wasn't a total dummy, so even if I was getting shut out on the buzzer I still looked like I knew a thing or two," he said. "And I would have been happy with that."

His love of novels—he was an English literature major in college—and general fascination

with the world have served him well on "Jeopardy!"

He's also got a willingness to study. A teetotaler, Jennings read up on alcoholic drinks in anticipation of the "potent potables" category that can, and did, come up. He's easily handled it.

He has one regret: a "vague collective guilt" for the players who had the misfortune to come up against him as he's become increasingly comfortable on the show.



Jennings

RECORD RACK

A sampling of new releases

Angie Stone

"Stone Love" (J)



"Girls of the world, I'm pretty sure that you're feelin' like I'm feelin' this evenin'," R&B vet Betty Wright declares in the intro to "That Kind," a track that is pure pop-soul confection. "You know sometimes you always feel like there's something that can make you laugh better, something that can make you feel better. Oh, I know all about that. Tell 'em what you want, Angie."

Stone celebrates good times not just in that tune but throughout this warm, uplifting, revealing album.

Like most soul singers, the fluid, graceful Stone has reflected on the painful side of relationships. But soul music is also about exorcising pain and "Stone Love" tells us here what romance feels like when it is just blossoming.

Snoop Dogg adds to the charm of "I Wanna Thank Ya" and Anthony Hamilton duets "Stay for a While." Elsewhere, Stone shines on her own, especially the "U-Haul," a song co-written and co-produced by Missy Elliott that serves as a playful statement of survival.

By sticking to a single subject, "Stone Love" lacks the range and ambition of her splendid "Mahogany Soul" album in 2001, but it is still a joy. (Robert Hilburn/Los Angeles Times)



The Polyphonic Spree

"Together We're Heavy" (Hollywood)



The opening song, "We Sound Amazed," has a reference to a "new religion." The next one, "Hold Me Now," mentions a "new age." And there are numerous references to sunshine and light. If Tim Delaughter wants to deflect suggestions that there's something cultish and hippie about his two-dozen-strong band-cum-chamber-orchestra-cum-choir, well, this won't do it. But if he wanted to channel the spirit of the sprawling, robed ensemble's colorful concerts into a strong, inspiring album, he's done a terrific job.

The giddiness of the band's spirited (if semiamateurish) chorus and mix of orchestral and rock instruments echoes Delaughter's zeal, but it's focused into an appealingly professional package. And Delaughter's writing has stepped up as well, as he weaves his clear reference points ("Pet Sounds," "Sgt. Pepper," '70s Saturday morning cartoons) into an increasingly personal fabric.

Such highlights as "Two Thousand Places at Once," about keeping your head in stressful times, aren't so much songs as patchworks of hooks and choruses, but they're killer hooks and choruses. And even at its most hippie-ish, the message of love and hope largely avoids being cloying, while a few self-deflating winks (including the album title) help keep it all grounded.

This may not make new converts, but Spree fans will find much cause to rejoice. (Steve Hochman/Los Angeles Times)

Brandy

"Afrodisiac" (Atlantic)

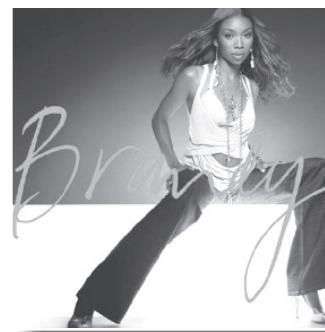


Breaking UP is hard to do, but it's been a blessing in disguise for R&B singer and TV sitcom star Brandy. Her 2003 divorce (and her new romance with basketball star Quentin Richardson) has given her new album some meaty subject matter and a semblance of a story line, and her change of producers from Rodney Jerkins to Timbaland has shaken up Brandyland with the earthiness and eccentricity of the latter's sound.

Timbaland guides Brandy from the sparest of settings to deep funk chambers, dropping in traces of reggae and Middle Eastern, transforming vocal utterances into full-on rhythm tracks, even summoning a spirit of vintage rural soul music. Kanye West produced the album's first single, the relatively bland "Talk About Our Love," but Timbaland is the adventure here.

Brandy is up for the challenge on some levels. Her lyrics about the cycle of desire, deception, betrayal and freedom ring with grace and authenticity (tipping her hand, she quotes a Coldplay lyric in one song and samples the group in another). Her dusky, grainy voice has a sultry allure on ballads, and she nails the percussive vocal line of "Sadiddy," which has the feel of a kids' rhyming game.

But Brandy has always tended toward blandness and is either unequipped or too restrained to unleash the soulful vocal flights that give R&B its distinctive stamp. And nowhere do you hear the pain and conflict you'd expect from someone who's dating a member of the Clippers. (Richard Cromelin/Los Angeles Times)



The Roots

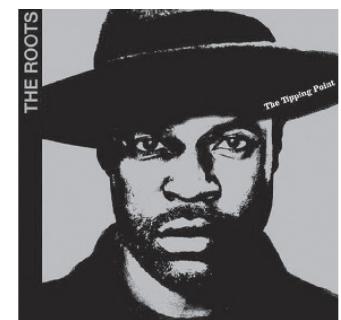
"The Tipping Point" (Geffen)



Known as "the hip-hop band," this Philadelphia-based collective has garnered more acclaim for its consistently stellar stage show than for its recordings, on which core members ?uestlove (drums), Black Thought (raps), Kamal Gray (keyboards) and Leonard "Hub" Hubbard (bass) often deliver minimalist grooves and lyrics about little more than Black Thought's microphone prowess.

The same holds true for the majority of the crew's surprisingly sedate fifth major label studio album (due Tuesday). Whereas some of the group's earlier material contained a mix of thought-provoking subject matter and knockout beats (see 1999's masterful "Things Fall Apart"), there is little meat to this collection. The beats are often stripped down to bland, drum-driven backdrops and the raps have little direction and/or meaning. On the single "Don't Say Nuthin,'" Black Thought mumbles his way through the chorus, coming off more clumsy and confusing than stylish or adventurous.

When Black Thought does deliver poignant social commentary, as on the chilling "Guns Are Drawn," his vocals are muddled in the guitar-driven groove and sandwiched within a feeble chorus. The Roots have always been more about the music than the lyrics, but "Tipping Point" excels at neither. (Soren Baker/Los Angeles Times)



obit borja

Album scale: one star (poor) to four (excellent).

'Spider-Man 2' fends off Ferrell, Arthur

By DAVID GERMAIN
AP MOVIE WRITER

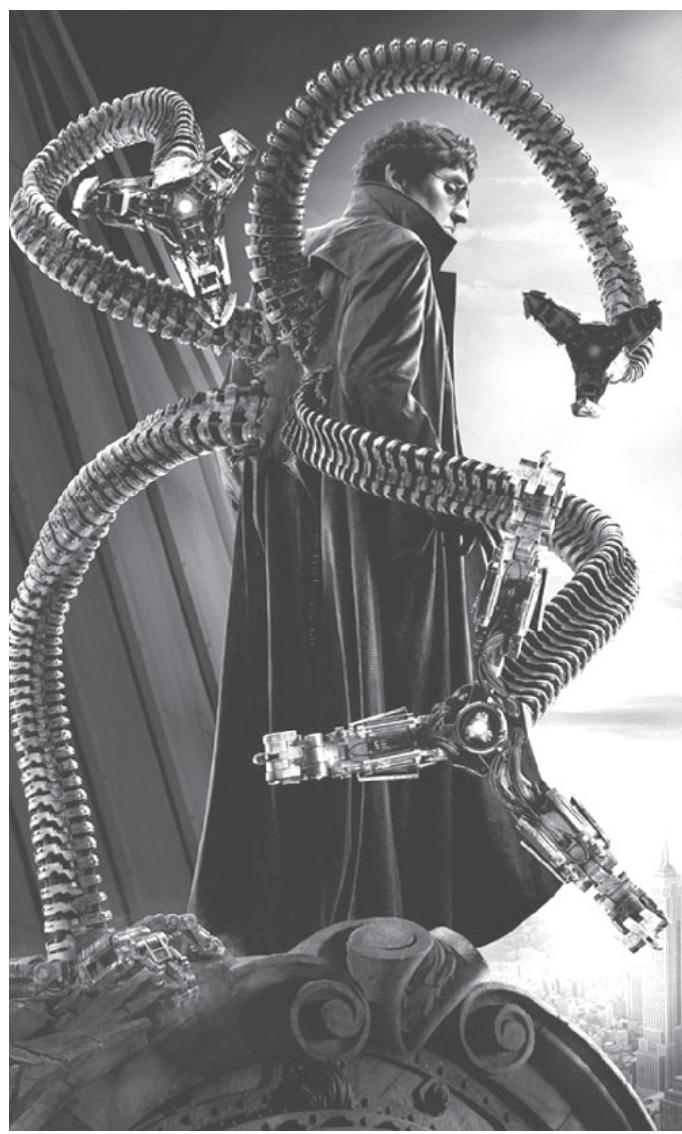
LOS ANGELES (AP)—Spider-Man fended off an anchorman and a king at the weekend box office to hold on to its supremacy. "Spider-Man 2" took in \$46 million in its second weekend, pushing its total to \$257.3 million after just 12 days, according to studio estimates Sunday.

Will Ferrell's broadcast-news comedy "Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy" premiered a strong No. 2 with \$28 million, but "King Arthur," starring Clive Owen, had a so-so opening of \$15.2 million to come in third.

The weekend's other new wide release, the girl-power flick "Sleepover," debuted a weak No. 10 with \$4.2 million.

Michael Moore's "Fahrenheit 9/11" was a healthy holdover in its third weekend, at No. 4 with \$11 million and raising its total to \$80.1 million. Moore's assault on President Bush over the Sept. 11 attacks, "Fahrenheit 9/11" appears headed beyond \$100 million, which would make it the first documentary to cross that mark.

Twelve days into its run, "Spider-Man 2" had grossed about \$20 million more than the original "Spider-Man" had at



the same point. That improves its chances of exceeding the \$403.7 million total domestic take for "Spider-Man," the top-grossing movie of 2002.

"We're on the right path, but that's a big number. I wouldn't be comfortable saying anything beyond that," said Rory Bruer, head of distribution for Sony, which released both "Spider-Man" movies. "I'm almost afraid to jinx it."

The solid opening of "Anchorman" follows Ferrell's holiday smash "Elf" last fall, lifting the former "Saturday Night Live" comedian to Hollywood's upper ranks.

"You can add him to the list of talent that can open a movie," said Jim Tharp, head of distribution for DreamWorks, which released "Anchorman."

"King Arthur," directed by Antoine Fuqua ("Training Day") and produced by Jerry Bruckheimer, opened on the same weekend that Bruckheimer's blockbuster "Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl" debuted a year ago.

But since its Wednesday debut, "King Arthur" had taken in \$23.6

million, just a third of the \$70.6 million, on the Arthurian legends that drops the sword-and-sorcery themes and sets the story toward the end of Roman rule in Britain, is the latest in a string of anemic debuts for distributor Disney.

1. "Spider-Man 2," \$46 million.
2. "Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy," \$28 million.
3. "King Arthur," \$15.2 million.
4. "Fahrenheit 9/11," \$11 million.
5. "The Notebook," \$6.53 million.
6. "White Chicks," \$6.5 million.
7. "Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story," \$5.4 million.
8. "The Terminal," \$5 million.
9. "Shrek 2," \$4.5 million.
10. "Sleepover," \$4.2 million.

million Wednesday-Sunday haul of "Pirates of the Caribbean."

"King Arthur," a different take

on the Arthurian legends that drops the sword-and-sorcery themes and sets the story toward the end of Roman rule in Britain, is the latest in a string of anemic debuts for distributor Disney.

It follows such Disney commercial duds as "Around the World in 80 Days," "The Alamo," "Raising Helen" and "Home on the Range."

Disney head of distribution Chuck Viane said that like "Troy," a historical epic whose overseas revenues far outpaced its domestic gross, "King Arthur" should perform well internationally. Owen and co-star Keira Knightley have strong appeal in Europe, he said.

Nielsen in public battle over credibility

NEW YORK (AP)—For years, television networks have privately grumbled about the company that counts their viewers, but the complaints rarely echoed outside of the industry. Now Nielsen Media Research is in the cross-hairs.

A campaign waged by the Fox network's corporate parent and minority advocacy groups, who claim that a new ratings system undercounts minorities, culminates in a hearing Thursday before the Senate Communications Subcommittee.

The campaign tests Nielsen's credibility and is an effort to make a business monopoly more responsive.

"Nielsen is being very pig-headed," said Alex Nogales, president of the National Hispanic Media Coalition. "They don't seem to understand they have a very special responsibility to the public."

But Nielsen spokesman Jack Loftus responded that critics have damaged Nielsen's reputation without ever providing credible research to prove their complaints are valid. Nielsen would not make its president, Susan Whiting, available for an interview.

Nielsen's ratings are the currency used to set prices for television commercials, a business that approaches \$50 billion a year. Shows with poor ratings often quickly disappear.

The company measures viewership in two ways:

□ There's a national sample, in which an electronic "people

meter" is attached to the televisions of participating families and records what they watch.

□ Four months a year in individual markets, Nielsen takes a separate sample in individual markets with a different methodology: families fill out diaries of what they watch. You know them as "sweeps" months, when TV stations fill up on their best programming to pump up ratings.

Nielsen has begun replacing the diaries with people meters in local markets, first in Boston two years ago, and this year in New York and Los Angeles.

The company has a financial incentive for moving forward, since the changes will provide Nielsen with more detailed information it can sell to more clients.

Fox says the company asked them to pay 25 percent more for local people meter samples.

Nielsen has admitted to being taken aback by the campaign.

"I think it's damaged our reputation," Loftus said. "This has been a deliberate assault on our reputation orchestrated by News Corp. They've put millions of dollars into a disinformation campaign."

The irony is that the company has spent years hearing networks plead for updated technology, he said.

"They were really behind us," he said, "until they looked at their numbers."

Although Nielsen stands by its work, the independent Media Rating Council decided late last month not to recommend accredi-

tation of the new service, without saying specifically why.

No one—not even Nielsen's critics—argues that diaries are better than people meters. Asking people to remember and write down what they watched each week was simple when homes had one TV with three or four channels; not so with multiple sets, hundreds of channels and remote controls that allow easy surfing.

Yet networks became alarmed when people meter tests in New York and Los Angeles showed big differences from the diaries. Some shows popular with minorities such as "The Parkers" and "One on One" dropped sharply in the ratings.

News Corp., which owns Fox and some UPN stations in big cities, hired a Washington consulting group led by former members of the Clinton administration to orchestrate a campaign with the slogan "Don't count us out."

They believe Nielsen hasn't worked hard enough to build samples that accurately reflect diverse marketplaces.

In an example cited by top CBS researcher David Poltrack, 21 percent of the people identified as "black" in the New York people meter sample were Spanish-speaking. In the group of people filling out diaries, that number was 11 percent.

As a result, the people meter results showed significantly fewer blacks watching programs like "The Parkers" and far more watching Spanish-lan-

guage television. Demographically, the truth is somewhere in the middle, he said.

Fox executives also believe that the people meters, which require participating families to punch a remote control-like device frequently to identify each person watching, takes some getting used to. Younger viewers—the kind Fox depends upon—are more likely to let it slide.

"The sample is getting better every day," Poltrack said. "But there are still issues and there's no reason for not taking the time to get it right."

To quiet some of the criticism, Nielsen said it would run the diary and people meter systems side by side in New York and Los Angeles for one month.

The New York results (Los Angeles began operating only last week) have shown fewer differences, outside researchers say. Unfortunately, the diary system is becoming less reliable as a benchmark.

"They don't have the resources to keep two things up," said Alan Wurtzel, NBC's chief researcher. "I think they're very distracted and they're spread very thin. They're just running around trying to put out separate fires."

Although the Boston launch received much less publicity, it had some of the same problems, said Fred Reynolds, chief executive of the CBS stations group. Major network affiliates wouldn't subscribe to the service for more than a year, applying financial pressure to force improvements, he said.

Dieters pray for strength to lead healthy lifestyle

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: My cousin, "Hazel," was recently told by her doctor that she must lose 75 pounds. She tells me that sticking to her diet is almost impossible. Years ago, you printed a prayer for dieters in your column. It was based on the 23rd Psalm. I kept a copy of it for years, but I lost it. Would you please print it again?

SYMPATHETIC
IN TAOS, N.M.



Dear Abby

DEAR SYMPATHETIC: I couldn't locate the prayer you requested, but the premise intrigued me—so I wrote one myself. I hope it inspires your friend. I empathize with her. By the way, she's not alone. I am told that one-third of all Americans are overweight. Read on:

A DIETER'S PRAYER

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;
He maketh me to lie down on vinyl-covered gym mats.
He leadeth me to flavored calorie-free waters;
He restoreth my goals.
He diverteth me from the path of midnight snacking for
my health's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the alley of the Vendors of
Pastry, I will fear no weevil; for thou art with me;
My diet and exercises, they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me
Spread with veggies and low-fat protein;
Thou steameth my fish in foil,
My resolve runneth over.
Surely, if I follow this living plan all the days of my life,
My hips will be slim forever.
Amen.

□ □ □ □

DEAR ABBY: A little over a year ago, after reading your column about a man who had experienced testicular cancer, I was prompted to examine myself. It was something I had never thought about until that day. Not once had I ever considered the possibility that it could actually happen to me.

Sure enough, I found a large lump that sent a cold chill down my spine. My general practitioner didn't think it was anything to be concerned about. But I was still worried, so I made an appointment for a second opinion with a urologist. He had a waiting list a month long, but the morning after I consulted him I found myself in the hospital having my first surgery.

Now, one year later, after two surgeries and six weeks of chemotherapy, I am 99 percent cured and feeling great.

Thank you, Abby, for raising my awareness about this serious disease. I can't stress strongly enough the extreme importance of self-examination and early detection. Your column saved my life.

GRATEFUL GUY
IN MARYLAND

DEAR GRATEFUL: I'm pleased that my column helped you. The American Cancer Society informs me that when testicular cancer is diagnosed early, it is highly curable. Testicular self-examinations are quick and easy, and should be performed once a month. A simple way to do it is while taking a shower. For more information, contact the American Cancer Society by calling the toll-free number (800) 227-2345 or visiting the Web site: www.cancer.org.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

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ROCKEFELLER, 94

Laurance Rockefeller and his wife are shown in this 1986 file photo. Rockefeller a conservationist, philanthropist and leading figure in the field of venture capital, died in his sleep Sunday morning. He was 94. AP

Brown posts bond on battery charge

ATLANTA (AP)—R&B singer Bobby Brown turned himself in to jail officials Sunday night—a few hours before a court-imposed deadline—and was released after posting a \$2,000 bond on charges he hit his wife, singer Whitney Houston.

"He arrived at the jail, was photographed and fingerprinted and posted his bond," said Lt. Clarence Huber of the Fulton

County Sheriff's Department.

In May, a judge had ordered there was enough evidence for Brown to stand trial on misdemeanor battery charges for allegedly hitting Houston in the face at their home near Alpharetta, a suburb north of Atlanta.

The judge had given Brown until midnight Sunday to turn himself in, and the singer showed up with less than four hours to spare.

Simple battery is punishable by up to a year in jail and a \$1,000 fine. Normally on a first offense in domestic-violence cases, the charge is dismissed if the defendant undergoes counseling.

Brown left R&B group New Edition in the late 1980s for a solo career. His hits include "My Prerogative" and "Every Little Step," but he has become more famous for his numerous

brushes with the law and his turbulent marriage with Houston.

In February, Brown spent a month in jail for multiple probation violations before being released a month early for a March child-support hearing in Massachusetts. There, he spent another night in jail before paying a former lover more than \$60,000 in back child-support payments.

Rosie's cruise line gets Key West welcome

KEY WEST, Fla. (AP)—Rosie O'Donnell's new cruise line is getting a warm welcome in sunny Key West.

O'Donnell will receive the key to the city this week when her cruise, billed as the first that caters to gay and lesbian families, stops at the popular island port Wednesday on its inaugural voyage, officials said.

The Norwegian Dawn's seven-day trip was scheduled to depart New York on Sunday and is the first cruise of R Family Vacations, the O'Donnell-

backed company that promotes family-friendly vacations for gays and lesbians.

Key West has long fostered a reputation as a tolerant vacation community that is especially friendly to gays and lesbians. A street fair will provide entertainment for children on the cruise.

O'Donnell married Kelli Carpenter O'Donnell in a civil ceremony Feb. 26 in San Francisco. The duo are raising four children together and are strong advocates of gay marriage and adoption.



Rosie O'Donnell is shown in this Oct. 30, 2003, file photo in New York. AP

Kravitz performs at Prince Charles party



Britain's Prince Charles, left, is embraced by former Spice Girl Geri Halliwell as Lenny Kravitz and Lionel Richie, right, look on at the 'Party in the Park' sponsored by the Prince's Trust, in Hyde Park, London, Sunday July 11, 2004. AP

LONDON (AP)—Prince Charles hosted a party Sunday in Hyde Park for thousands of revelers, entertained by stars including Lenny Kravitz and Avril Lavigne.

Other acts at the outdoor benefit for The Prince's Trust charity included Jamelia, Alanis Morissette, Nelly Furtado, The Corrs and Lionel Richie.

Charles chatted with performers and watched the show from a royal box.

"The prince asked me what I was doing, I told him about my tour," Kravitz said. "It's been a while since we met."

London's Metropolitan police said about 85,000 people jammed the park for the concert.

The Prince's Trust helps troubled young people gain skills and begin to work. Last year's Party in the Park raised more than \$1.8 million for the group.

Actor Milner seeks donor for daughter

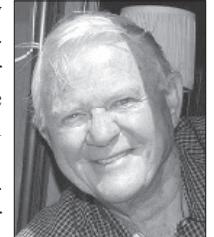
LOS ANGELES (AP)—Actor Martin Milner is seeking the public's help in finding a bone marrow donor for his leukemia-stricken daughter. Milner, who starred in the TV series "Route 66" and "Adam 12," said a marrow transplant may be the only hope for 45-year-old Amy Milner, and no suitable donor has been found among family members or on the national registry.

Milner hopes widespread blood testing will help his daughter and others.

"There's a good likelihood that somebody else could be saved, somebody not related to us at all. ... There are a lot of people waiting for good news," Milner said.

His daughter Amy, a single mother who lives in Encinitas, was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia in February 2003.

Blood drives to find a match are scheduled in San Diego and Carlsbad this month and one is set for the Screen Actors Guild in Los Angeles on July 16.



Milner

Pastimes

Shannon Essenpreis wins Jr. Miss crown

MOBILE, Ala. (AP)—Texan Shannon Essenpreis was crowned America's Junior Miss after belting out a Broadway showtune and soaring through interviews with her "bubbly" personality.

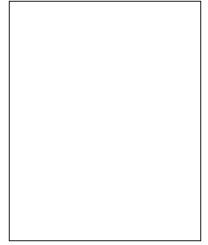
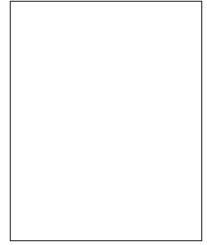
Though Essenpreis was crowned Saturday night, television viewers won't see it until July as producers switch to a "reality TV" format. PAX Network camera crews followed the 50 contestants for two weeks leading up to Saturday's contest.

Essenpreis was among five finalists who were given on-the-spot questions tailored to their individual interests. She was asked how she would use the enthusiasm she's displayed as her school's mascot into her planned career as a broadcast journalist.

"I was so nervous," she said after the show. "And the question was so long that by the end of it, I wasn't sure what they were asking me."

Her answer? She'll report on the positive aspects of life while maintaining her personal optimism.

After the contest, Heisman Trophy winner and Junior Miss judge Herschel Walker said he was particularly impressed with Essenpreis' charm and "bubbly" character in her interview last week. Essenpreis won a \$50,000 scholarship.



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